

a lot to those serving far away, and to those you've welcomed home from their deployments. We blessed -- we are blessed with the finest military any nation has ever fielded, and may we never take them or their families for granted. (Applause.)

These are busy times for the nation's defenders, because we're at war with an enemy that hit us first, hit us hard, and has ambitions to cause ever greater destruction inside our country. In two weeks, we'll mark another anniversary of September 11th, 2001 -- and we'll recall the attacks that took 3,000 lives and did such great harm to our nation. We'll be reminded, once again, of the kind of adversaries that we face in this war. These extremists don't wear a uniform or recognize any standard of warfare. They hate our country; they are determined to kill as many Americans as they can; and they are fully prepared to kill themselves in the process. Simply stated, an extremist cabal has turned its guns on the United States and the civilized world. For the sake of our freedom and security, we must not relent until this enemy is destroyed. (Applause.)

In light of what happened in 2001, and considering what we've learned since about the enemy's operations and intentions, it's all the more remarkable that America has not had another 9/11. The fact that we've been safe this long is not an accident of history or just a stroke of luck. It is an achievement. We've undertaken a broad-based, unyielding effort to protect this country -- an effort set in motion and led by the President of the United States, and carried out by investigators, security professionals, intelligence operatives, and military personnel. No one can guarantee the enemy won't make another strike on our homeland -- indeed, that is their objective. But one thing is certain: We will not sit and wait to be hit again. (Applause.)

There was a time when terrorist attacks were treated mainly as an issue of law enforcement -- where you investigated the incident, arrest the bad guys, try them, and put them in jail. The first attack on the World Trade Center, back in 1993, resulted in indictments and prison terms for the major perpetrators. But that did not remove the danger to America. Terrorist attacks against American interests continued throughout the '90s, from the killing of servicemen in Riyadh and the Khobar Towers, to the destruction of our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, to the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000.

Outside a few limited strikes, the terrorists never paid a real price for any of this. They believed they could strike us and get away with it. And they grew more confident that if they hit Americans hard enough, the United States would change our policies, abandon our commitments, and run away. They took to the examples of Beirut in 1983 and Somalia in 1993 -- when terrorists killed Americans and we thereafter withdrew our forces.

September 11th changed everything. We saw the kind of destruction that could be caused by 19 men armed with box cutters and boarding passes -- 19 men who were, in fact, part of an international network of terror. We had to contemplate, as well, their broader goals -- to acquire more deadly weapons; to gain new safe havens to wage further attacks; to spread an ideology of hatred and resentment across the broader Middle East and beyond.

After 9/11, it was clear that this mixture of ideology and violence, operating across borders and in secret, added up to more than just a law enforcement problem. It was, and is, a strategic threat to the United States, and must be dealt with systematically. (Applause.) So President Bush made a decision